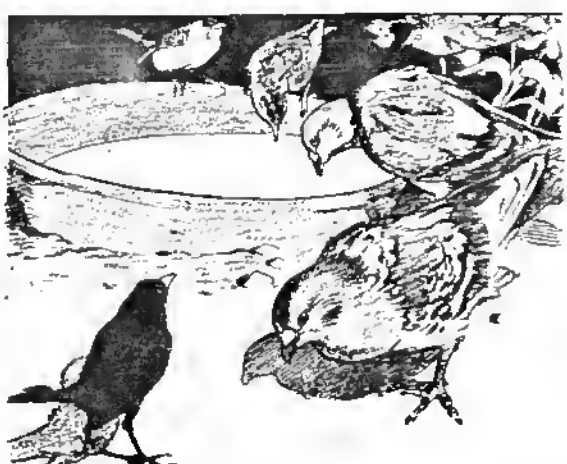
HOW TO DRAW BIRDS



by

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INTRODUCTION

Quite recently I was asked by someone, why I liked drawing birds so much. Well, I had never really considered why—I just drew them, but when you really come to think of it, you know, there are a lot of amazing and interesting things about birds that most people don't realise.

Just think of all the varieties of plumage, in what lovely parterns this is arranged, on some birds so indescribably delicate. But did you know that all this pattern, so lovely in itself, is there to serve the bird a very useful purpose? It is really a sort of camouflage, about which we have heard such a lot recently, a "protective coloration" which merges itself into the bird's natural background of rushes, grass or stones, and as long as the bird is motionless it is invisible to its enemies. I expect our camouflage experts have learnt a lot from the study of these protective patterns and colours of birds. This colour, too, is never quite the same. I was watching some lapwings the other day by a lakeside, and sometimes their dark backs appeared

quite grey, and then perhaps the light would catch one, and it seemed to glisten like shot silk with purples and greens.

Those big aeroplanes which fly overhead look rather like great birds, don't they? You see, the men who design them have been studying the shape and flow of lines of a bird, which they call its streamline, and they have tried to adapt these shapes to the designs because they know that birds are the most perfectly streamlined creatures in the world. But I am afraid man has got a long way to go before he produces a flying machine as efficicot as some of the birds. Look at the sea-gull, how easily he floats on effortless wings. Throw a piece of bread in the air and he swoops with the precision of a Spitfire. Of course man will never be able to invent a covering for his aeroplanes which is as efficient as the birds—I mean feathers. Nothing else we know of combines such lightness and flexibility with such strength. It is these wonderful things,—feathers—which make it possible for such a heavy bird as the swan to fly many thousands of miles on migrating. You would never dream this possible to see him waddling along the ground like something out of a Silly Symphony.

Aren't there a lot of exciting things to know about birds? You know, the more you watch and observe them as they go about their ordinary—I should say extraordinary—lives, the more amazing and wonderful things you will find out about them. I don't know of any other living creatures who are so much the masters of every element. Why, some ducks, besides being very strong flyers, not only swim on the water but under it as well and dive and walk! Of course to be able to do this they have developed perfectly and beautifully shaped bodies. It must take a very quick little brain to control the energy required for such rapid and varied action. This bright bird-brain looks at you from every avian eye. No wonder that all through the ages mankind has been absorbed and fascinated by the study of bird-life.

On the temple walls of ancient Egypt you may see carvings and low reliefs of the birds men venerated and worshipped for three thousand years. Ages ago in China, artists had captured for ever on silk, graceful attitude and delicate pattern. Monuments to the eternal appeal of birds are these lovely relics, caught in still attitude

upon the ageless stone and silk.

I think that the real reason I like so much drawing birds is not entirely because I am so interested in their lives and actions, but more so because of the innumerable patterns I can make out of their so varied and graceful movements, the limitless groupings, arrangements and placings of curves and lines and shapes that arise from their ever-varying postures. It is so exciting trying to get just the right lines, to suggest an attitude or rhythm momentarily observed, be it fluent line of swan or heron, or rugged squareness of the eagle. Art and beauty are so inseparably woven together, and birds are undoubtedly the most perfectly formed of living creatures.

Wouldn't you like to be able to draw them yourself? There is nothing to stop you, because the whole secret of drawing is learning to "see properly," and we all have two eyes, so that once you have learnt to observe and use your eyes properly you too can get started on this fascinating study of drawing from the living bird. The trouble with most beginners is that they see too much. By too much I mean they become absorbed in details of plumage and delicate pattern before

they have learnt to see those big simple shapes upon the *surface of which* these accessories are placed. Consequently they produce a flat feathered map of a bird.

I have devoted a part of this little book to explaining the basic form and construction of a bird, the few simple masses in which the feathers are arranged. And once you have got interested in these things and learnt what few important facts to look for, it will surprise you what fun you will get out of drawing from living, moving birds.

A METHOD OF APPROACH

Most people I have talked to about drawing birds have said that "it must be very difficult because birds move so quickly and never keep still." These people, of course, are thinking about the way they have been taught to draw such subjects as still-life groups or a posed model, where they are told to close one eye, hold a pencil at arm's length, and measure up relative proportions that they are unable to judge with their own unaided eyes. This method is bad in any sort of drawing (it makes you see things as 'flat' not round objects, and leads to an expressionless sort of copying) and in our sort of drawing *i.e.*, moving, living birds, it is of course a quite impossible method. Well, you say, just how am I to tackle the subject?

You will remember in the introduction I said that drawing is really learning to "see properly,". "But," I hear you protest, "I can see probably quite as well as you can, but I still cannot draw!" Perhaps I should have said that 'seeing properly' is really knowing what to look for. The reason your drawing is not good is probably because when you look at a bird your eye is full of a lot of really unimportant details

MUTE SWAN

of plumage and small shapes. Now it takes quite a lot of study to be able to " see properly " and quickly too, the important shapes and main lines or rhythms of a pose. So I have told you a little about anatomy, that is, the construction of birds. After all, if you know how a wing works, for instance, your birds are far more likely to look as if they could fly than if you know nothing about such matters. If you know that feathers are arranged in big masses which can be easily seen, that differently shaped beaks are differently shaped for a reason, your drawings will look more convincing, more real. There are a lot more intensely interesting facts about birds which you will probably find out for yourself when you are watching them. They all help your understanding of the shape of the bird, in deciding what to put in and what to leave out in your drawing, and when you have learnt to do this you are well on the way towards " seeing properly " and therefore drawing properly. I say " well on the way to," because of course there is a lot more in drawing such beautiful creatures as birds than noticing a few dry scientific facts about their construction. But you will understand by now that with these facts in your head you are far better equipped to draw birds in all their charm and grace of

movement, in all their subtlety of line, than if you were without such knowledge. I do not suggest, however, that you set yourself the 'task' of learning anatomy like you would a lesson at school, for drawing is not a subject that can be taught like a school-room lesson—it is a subject to enjoy, and you will soon discover what an exciting adventure it will become. So refer to the anatomical part of this book, just when you feel the need to—look for the things I have pointed out on the birds themselves. Look and observe—look and observe and draw—and draw—and draw again. That is the way, the interesting way too, to learn.

You know, it isn't really a disadvantage at all that your models (the birds) are always moving and changing their 'poses.' You should take advantage of these changes and instead of trying to do a set drawing of just one pose that may be really quite ordinary and dull—like those awfully boring and tedious sort of "feathered maps" of birds, generally standing stiffly sideways, and looking as flat as pancakes in Natural History books—take a large sheet of paper pinned to a board and make a lot of drawings. Each time the bird moves

start a fresh drawing. You will find that the bird will often take up a former attitude again and you can resume drawing on any of your studies at once. You will learn far more about birds in this way, and produce drawings that are more interesting—that look alive. If I were you, I shouldn't use a lot of elaborate shading, at least not to start with. Try looking hard at the bird and noticing what are the main lines of a pose and put them down in free, long strokes. It will surprise you how a few lines can suggest such a lot. I have tried to show you in some of my own studies how a few lines are sometimes all that is necessary to hit off a pose.

Did you realise that every time you look at the bird and then look at your sheet of paper and make a line you are using your memory? To start with you will only remember a little for a very short time, but as you get to know more and have more practice you will find yourself able to remember a lot more for a great deal longer. It is this ability to memorise which will enable you to draw birds in action, especially in flight, when 'sight' drawing is out of the question. So practise memory drawing a lot: it will help you to remember important things.

Sometimes, of course, you will come across birds at rest or asleep—perhaps basking in the sun. Cormorants and shags often stand motionless with wings half-outstretched, as though it were so much washing hung out to dry!

Details such as beaks and feet, and particularly eyes—should be seized upon for study. An outstretched wing of a basking bird presents an opportunity for solving the problem of its foreshortening.

For rapid sketching it doesn't matter what you draw with—whether it be pen, pencil or chalk—it is the "rightness" of what is put down that matters. The drawings reproduced in this book were done, for the most part, with a carbon pencil on cartridge paper—but any paper will do. It is only by experimenting with different mediums that you will find the one which suits your own personal taste.

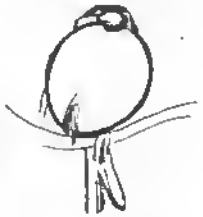
Now I am going to talk to you about what is really the most important thing in any drawing. It is what artists call "Feeling." By "feeling" I mean that quality in your drawing which shows that you have yourself had an exciting experience, that you have felt wonder at the flowing rhythm, the springing life that is the bird. In

short, you show evidence of using your imagination.

When you draw an eagle, try, in imagination, to be an eagle—you are the claws that grasp so firmly—the hooked, cruel beak, and the unquenchable fire that is the sheathed and stabbing glance of the King of Birds. If you can do this, almost unconsciously this will show in your drawing and make of it a work of art, a thing of beauty. This "feeling" is really the emotion you feel—that peculiar, unexplainable tightening inside that makes you want to laugh sometimes, sometimes to sing and dance for joy, and sometimes just a little sad. This is the most important thing of all to cherish, so do not pore over this or any book over long—Rush out into the sunshine—Art does not grow in dusty rooms and is not to be found by searching through books by learned men. No, it is under the great arch of heaven in the pure and sparkling air, through which on wondrous pinions fly the birds we draw, and you in your imagination can fly with them into what unknown and pleasant regions of the mind, to that perfection of Beauty towards which all art aspires.

A TALK ABOUT ANATOMY AND CONSTRUCTION

To start with I am going to talk about the general shape of a bird, and how the various parts of its body work.



You all know that a bird comes from an egg, and consequently a baby bird is shaped rather like an egg too. Indeed the bird's body retains this egg-like form even in the adult bird. Of course there are variations in shape adapted to the different species' mode of living. For instance, in the gulls and herons it is elongated, whilst in others, the small perching birds particularly, it is rounder.

A bird's body is built like our own on a bony framework. Although most of the bones correspond to ours they have become welded together into one solid framework. It has far more bones in the neck than we have, which gives the bird a far more flexible neck than animals or man.

The skull is nearly all eye-socket, and you will notice that pigeons, ducks, sparrows, etc. have the eyes placed on each side of the skull so that they can see all round them, whereas those birds that prey upon them have their eyes set more nearly in front.

In the drawing of the bird's bones, the black parts, *i.e.*, the neck, legs, and bones of wing, are the only movable parts. The body is, as I have said, built on a solid bony framework. This I have shaded in grey.

SKELETON OF BIRD

WINGS, FEATHERS AND FLIGHT

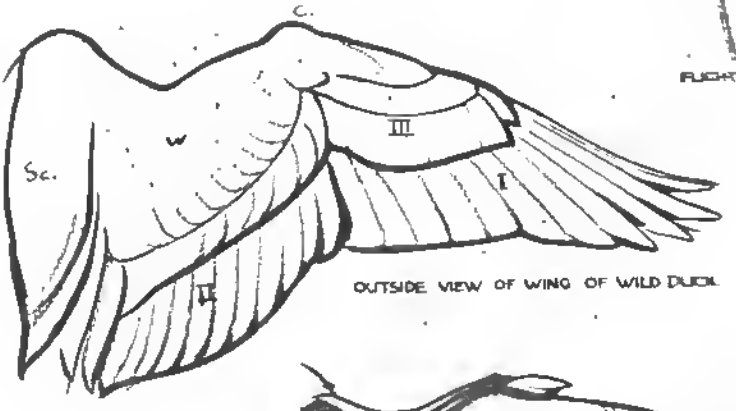
The wing of a bird is just like the arm of a man as regards its

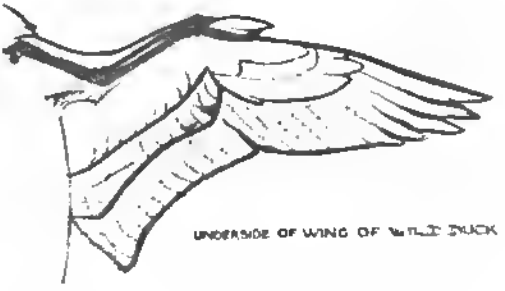
bony structure, the main difference occurring at the 'hand,' which in birds has become one large and elongated finger. Over these bones the wing-muscles and feathers are placed in such a way as to form what is known as the camber of a bird's wing. You will realise this when looking along a bird's open wing, as in the little sketch of a heron flying, it will be seen to curve upwards, umbrella fashion. If you push an open umbrella up and down quickly you will find it much easier to push it up than down because the camber of the umbrella seems to grip the air on the downward pull. This is roughly the principle that enables a bird to fly.

On page 21 is a view of a bird's wing as seen from above. The feathers are grouped in clearly defined masses. Into the long finger or "hand" of the bird are fitted the first flight feathers or primaries, usually 10 in number. From the forearm grow the secondary flight feathers, usually about 12 or 14 in number. The other groups serve to

streamline the wing, build up its camber and give support to the flight feathers. The underside of the wing is supported in the same manner. At the junction of the wing and shoulder are a clearly marked group of feathers called the scapular. These feathers in most birds are quite large and besides streamlining the lines of the wing to the body they also cover the junction of wing and body when the wing is folded in the resting bird, preventing moisture from trickling down inside. The diagram shows you how these groups arrange themselves when the wing is folded.

This arrangement of feathers is the same in all birds, although the relative proportions of the various groups may differ. You will see from my diagrams that the feathers overlap each other and all point one way. They act like the tiles of a roof for draining water off. You will see in the drawing of a feather that the quill or central rib is *not* in the middle. This is because this particular feather is a flight feather and it is only the flight feathers which have the quill in this position. In the overlapping of the feathers, the broad edge is underneath so that a wing looked at from above shows only the narrow





I Primaries
II Secondaries
III Tertiaries
Sc. Scapulars
c carpal joint
w. coverts.

or ' leading ' edge of the feather and from beneath only the broad or trailing edge. This is a very important thing to remember when drawing birds in flight, because when the wings are pressed down, the " trailing " broad edge of the feather is pushed tightly against the next feather. On the upstroke however the broad ends trail downwards, making gaps between each feather through which the air can pass : it is by the power of resistance to the air of the downward stroke that a bird can haul itself up into the sky. The drawings of a heron and a gull flying show this principle at work.

There is a page of drawings on page 23 which show you some of the various types of wings there are, in all of them I have indicated the main masses of the feathers. The first is a gull which spends a great part of its life in gliding and has developed a long, narrow pointed wing for this purpose. Notice the perfect streamlined appearance of the whole bird. Of quite a different order are the birds which live in woods and enclosed country : they have little short rounded wings to enable them to fly through close-cover with ease. Some, like the blackbird, have long tails to enable them to make rapid turns whilst flying at speed.

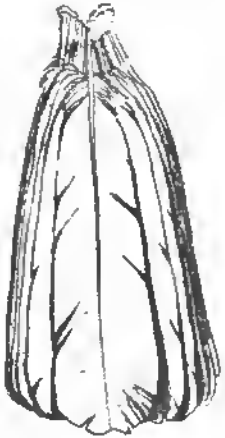
VARIOUS TYPES OF WINGS

Game birds and others of the open moorland where straight flying is all that is required have short, rounded tails.

You will recognise the big bird in the middle as an eagle. Look at its great wing-span—notice how the ends of its flight feathers are cut away towards the tip—they look rather like fingers when the bird is seen soaring in the sky. In varying proportions this type of wing is seen on buzzards, herons and crows. Ducks display them on the downward thrust of their wings during their first jump off from the water.

It is the falcons and hawks who combine the most perfect streamlining with the greatest muscular power. Their powerful muscles give them the heavy-shouldered look of the true athlete, and drive narrow pinions with such force and rapidity that they can easily overhaul most other birds on the wing.

The tail of a bird is formed in a fan of overlapping feathers, usually about 12 or 14. The main thing to remember is that the central feather is on the *top* of the tail, the others overlapping each other from *beneath* it. on each side,so that when the tail is closed it is the central feather you see, with the edges of the others receding beneath.



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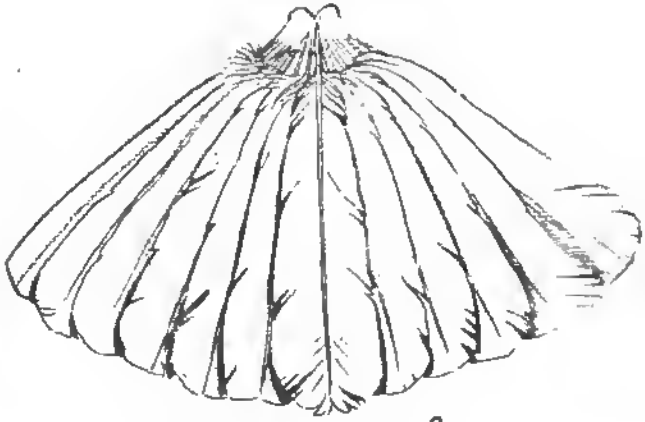

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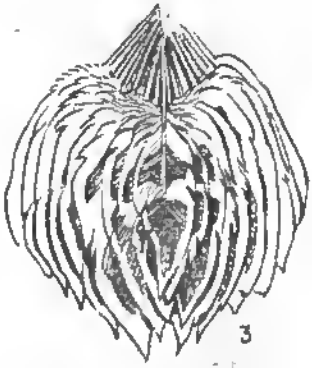

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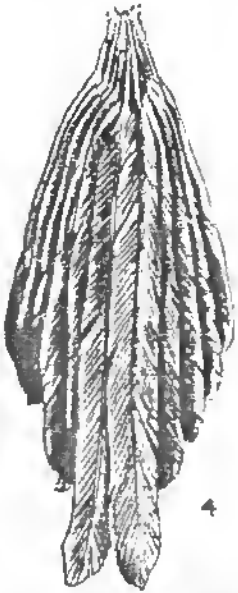


4

1 WOODPIGEON --(closed)
2 WOODPIGEON - -(open)
3 FEMALE WILD DUCK
4 MAGPIE

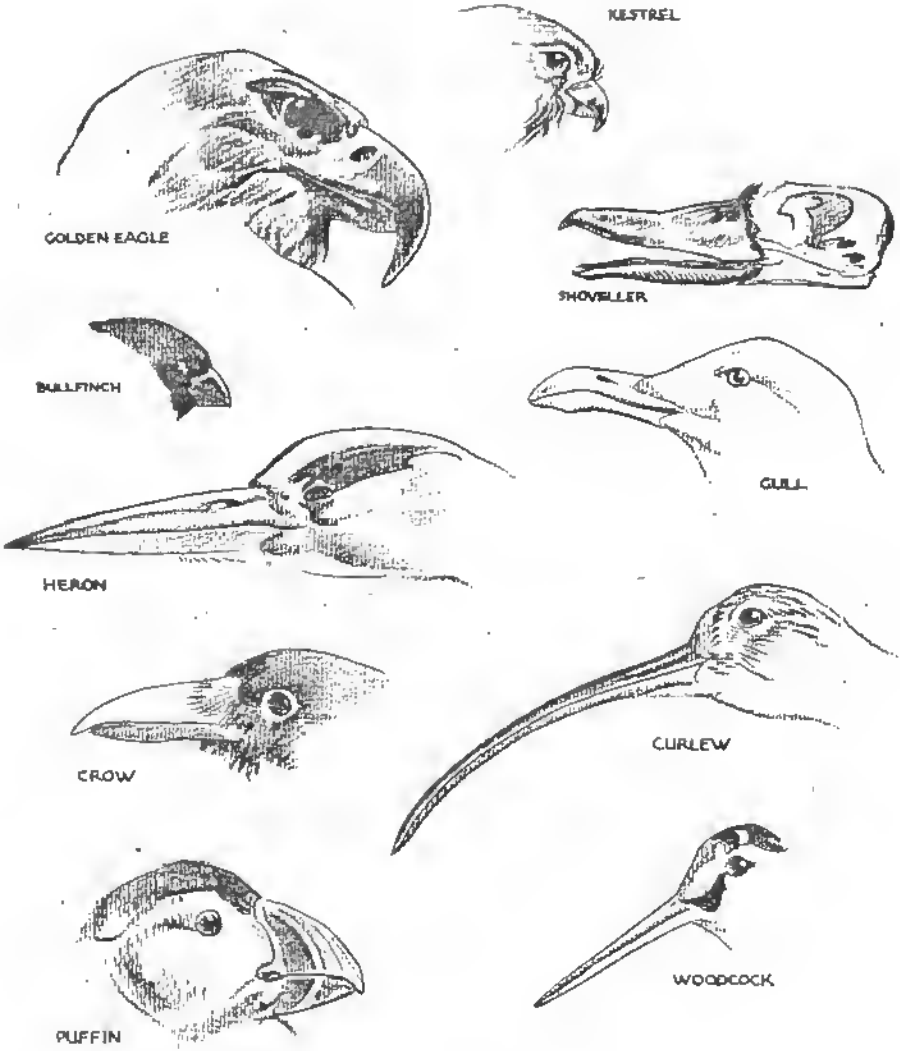
BEAKS

I have drawn on page 27 some of the various types of beaks. These differences in shape are governed by the way they find and eat their food. Some are like hooks—the eagles and hawks—who use their beaks to tear and rend their food. Some are long and dagger-shaped—like the herons who spear fish and eels on it. Different again are the long probe-like beaks of some of the waders. These they use to probe the soft mud of the estuaries where they search for their food.

Curlew, oyster-catchers, snipe and woodcock come under this category. The woodcock has a very interesting adaptation. It possesses a very sensitive, movable tip to its long bill, which enables it to grasp a worm under the mud, and withdraw it with very little effort.

Swallows and swifts possess short beaks which, however, have a mouth of great width to enable them to catch insects as they fly.

A duck possesses a very special sort of beak. The inside contains rows of small plates, like teeth which act as sieves, through which water is strained, the small particles of food being retained. These are just a few of the various types, there are many more.


KESTREL
GOLDEN EAGLE
SHOVELLER
BULLFINCH
GULL
HERON
CROW
CURLEW
WOODCOCK
PUFFIN

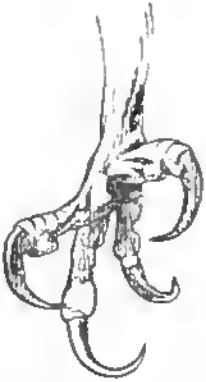
FEET

The scales of a bird's foot are most beautifully patterned, being arranged in a very decorative way. The first toe which corresponds to our thumb, is at the back, the second on the inside and has two bones, the third is in the middle and has three joints, the fourth on the outside has four joints. This arrangement is the rule in practically every sort of bird.

Opposite are various types of feet. The birds which perch, you will notice, have a long thumb or hind-toe in order to grasp the bough. These birds hop on the ground. Eagles and hawks have it strongly developed in order to grasp their prey and consequently have a very free movement. In ducks, and most birds who spend the best part of their time on the water, the three toes are joined by a web and the hind-toe is barely seen at all. In the swallow, which spends the greater part of its life on the wing, the feet are used mainly for clinging so all four toes are together. Woodpeckers and cuckoos are different; they have their toes in pairs, two in front and two behind. The cuckoo can transfer its second toe to the back or front as it pleases.

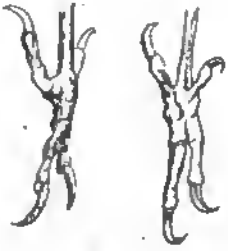
GOLDEN EAGLE
(EXTENDED)

GOLDEN EAGLE
(CLOSED)

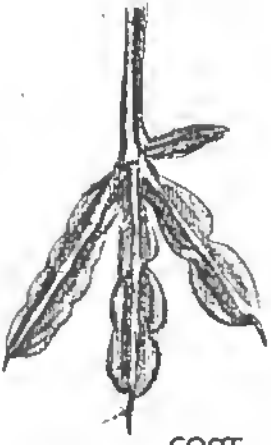


OSPREY

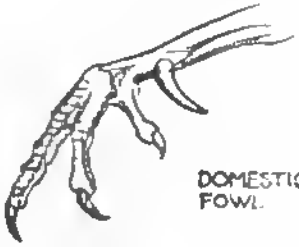
ROOK



WOODPECKER
(ZYGODACTYLE)



COOT



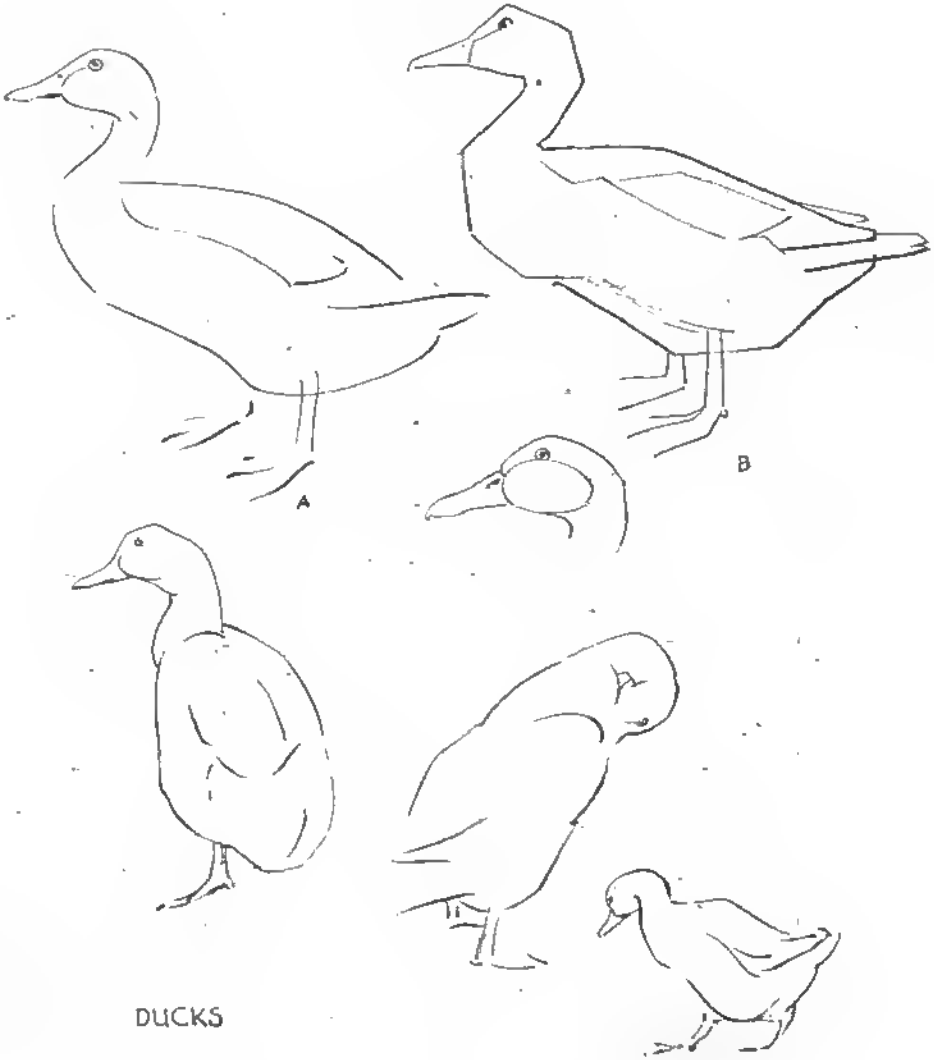
DOMESTIC
FOWL

DIFFERENT TYPES
OF FEET.

DUCKS

Draw with long sure lines. Do not be afraid of a mistake, you can always start again if things go wrong, and besides there is no time to waste in making tentative scratches when drawing from a model that may fly away any minute!

The Drawing of the standing duck "A" is executed mostly in long sweeping curves indicating the direction and area of the principal shapes. Curved lines always suggest movement and rhythm—but the basic construction and squareness of the bird should not be overlooked. Diagram "B" shows where this squareness may be looked for as a corrective to any tendency to over-emphasize the curves. Such over-emphasis always makes the drawing look weak and lacking in construction. The little drawing of the head shows how the position of the eye can always be determined by its relation to the oval shape of the cheek.

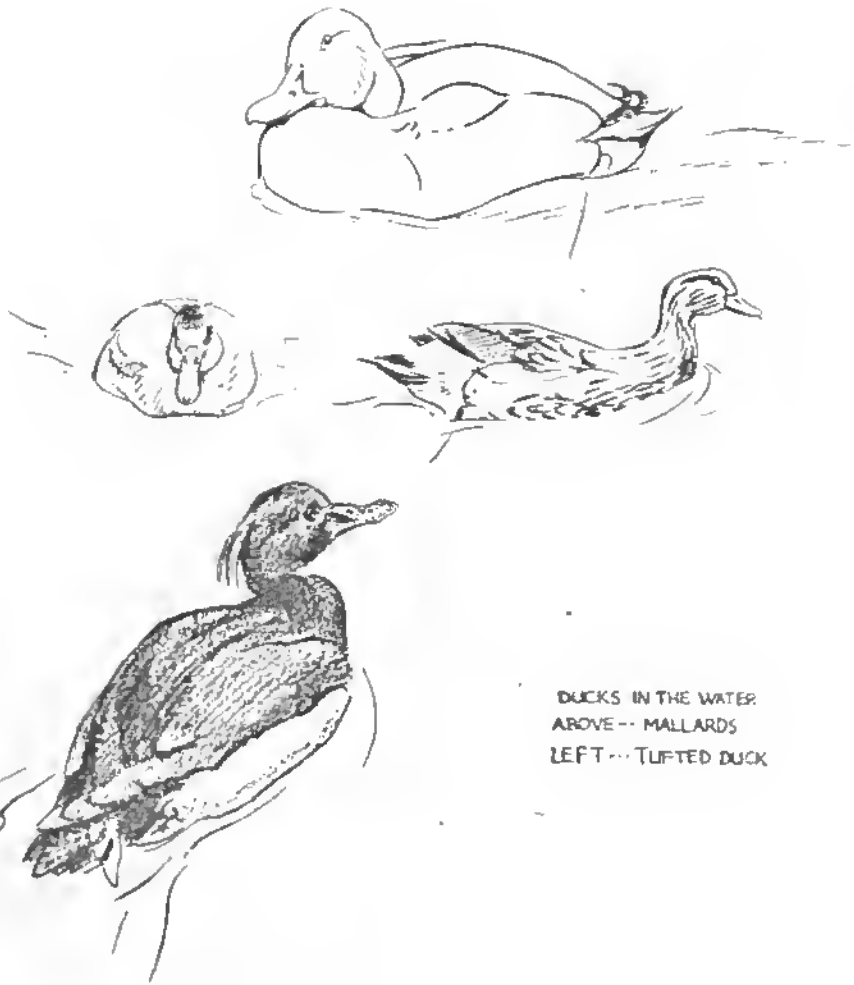


DUCKS

DUCKS, IN THE WATER

A duck's body is built like a boat, to float, and if you remember this you can't go far wrong. Careful observation of the way its breast pushes the water in front of it, and the position of the waterline, is very necessary. Make the bird float *in* the water and not merely sit *on* it. Willing models can easily be obtained on every park-lake by arming yourself with breadcrumbs.

There are many different species of wild duck but perhaps the best known is the Mallard. The drake looks very handsome with his glossy green head and neck, white collar, grey back and black upcurled tail coverts. His mate looks quite drab in comparison in her dress of mottled brown and buff. But then this sombre dress renders her nearly invisible when sitting motionless on the nest. Young males are marked in just the same way, only their heads and backs are darker.



DUCKS IN THE WATER.
ABOVE -- MALLARDS
LEFT -- TUFTED DUCK

WELL KNOWN BIRDS SEEN FROM THE BREAKFAST TABLE

Perhaps the most difficult of all birds to draw are those lively little birds which visit the bird-bath and breakfast tray in our own gardens. Their rapid movements, a constant source of delight to the onlooker, make it very difficult for the beginner to sketch them. So it is perhaps better to attempt drawing these birds after you have had a little practice drawing from the stately swan and quieter more reposeful duck.

On the opposite page is an apparently detailed study of a Missel thrush. But the two little diagrams above it show you how simple it is in its essentials. I looked first for the position and direction of the egg-shaped mass of its body—its relation to the bough—then the direction of the tail and position of head were rapidly indicated—and most important of all, the body must balance properly on legs whose feet grip the bough firmly. The main masses of the wing feathers were next observed, and then, to all intents and purposes, the important part of the drawing was done, the rest was simply a careful


A
B
MISSEL THRUSH

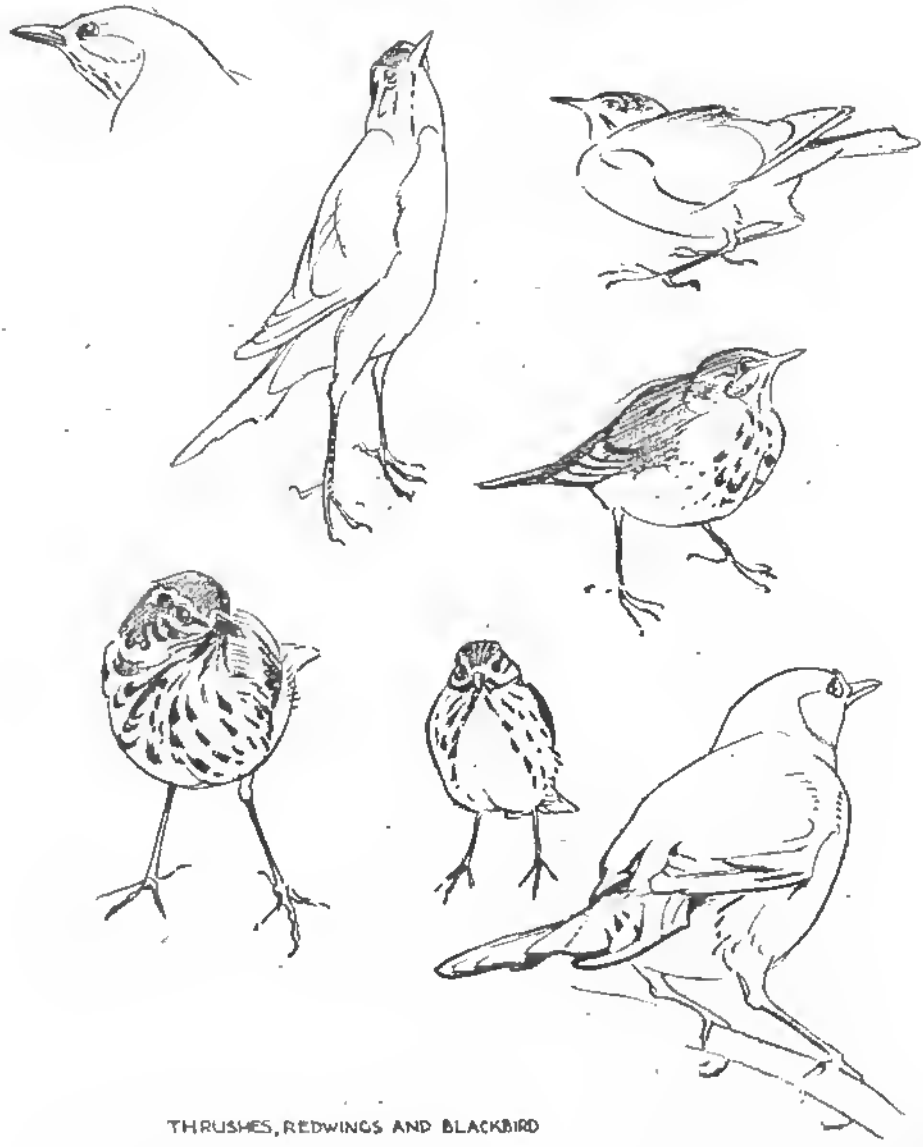
study of the markings, and shading was used only to indicate the differences of light and dark colour in the plumage pattern.

These rapid sketches of thrushes were all done by the same method of observing and drawing the big shapes first with simple long lines—with a mere indication of pattern where it is thought such markings would be useful. These are the sort of drawings you should try for (I hope you will be more successful though !).

Speed is essential to catch such momentary poses as that of the cheeky thrush, standing on tiptoe, who watched me as I drew him !

The Missel thrush is the largest British thrush—the spotting on its breast is bolder than that of the song thrush. Its habit of singing in the wildest weather has earned it the name of the Storm-cock.

The bottom left of the page are two studies of the Redwing—a continental thrush which visits us in the winter and is particularly in evidence in cold frosty weather. The remaining studies are of song-thrushes—excepting for the outline sketch of a blackbird—(bottom right) instantly recognisable from a starling by his long tail and jet uniform and orange bill.



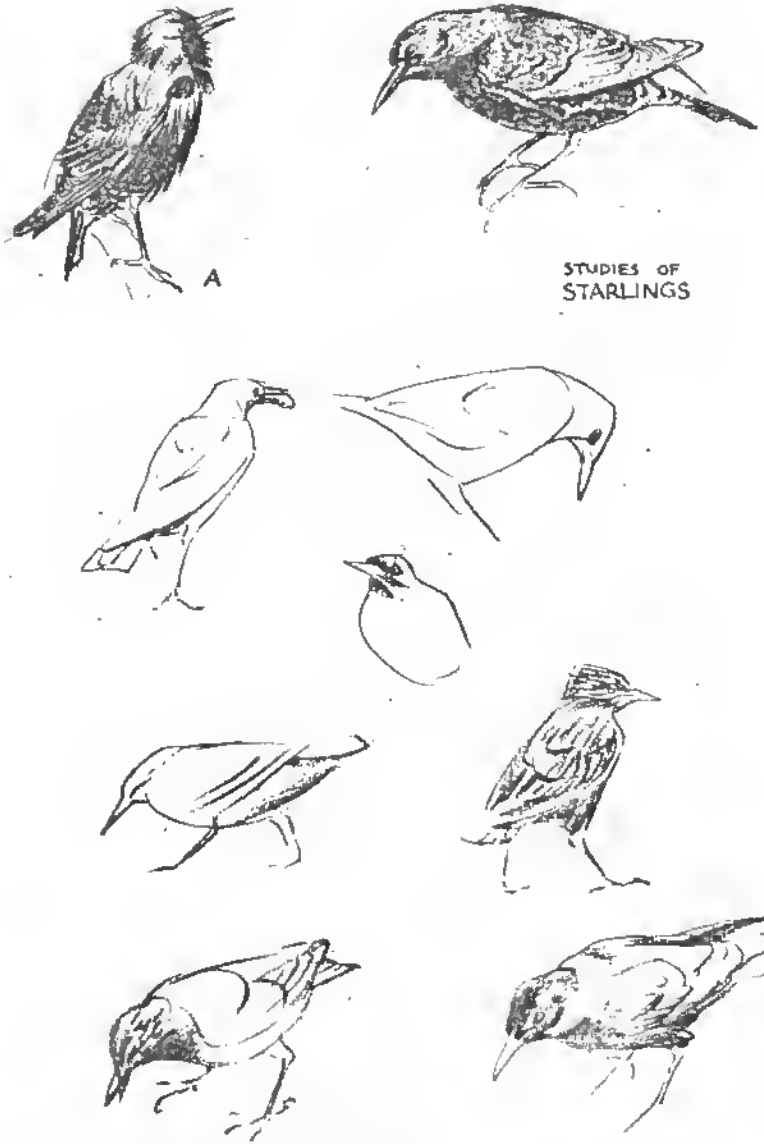
THRUSHES, REDWINGS AND BLACKBIRD

STARLINGS

A most amazing bird—always racing across the lawn at top-speed in an endeavour to satisfy an insatiable appetite. In his off-duty moments he may sometimes be seen on a chimney pot, with the feathers of his throat loosened and spiky, opening his beak and indulging in any song but his own, for he is a great mimic—(A.). Starlings congregate in huge flocks and do great service to the farmer by their wholesale slaughter of grubs and other insect pests.

At sunset they return in their thousands to their ancestral roosting places. In London there are many such roosting places on old buildings, and familiar to the business man returning home is their peculiar "frizzling" song mingling with the roar of the evening traffic. The plumage of this bird is a most beautiful irridescent coat which gleams in the sunlight with ever-varying hues of shot purples and greens.

These birds run on the ground, not hop, and a general spikiness and angularity of outline seems characteristic of them, and this feeling should be apparent in the studies.

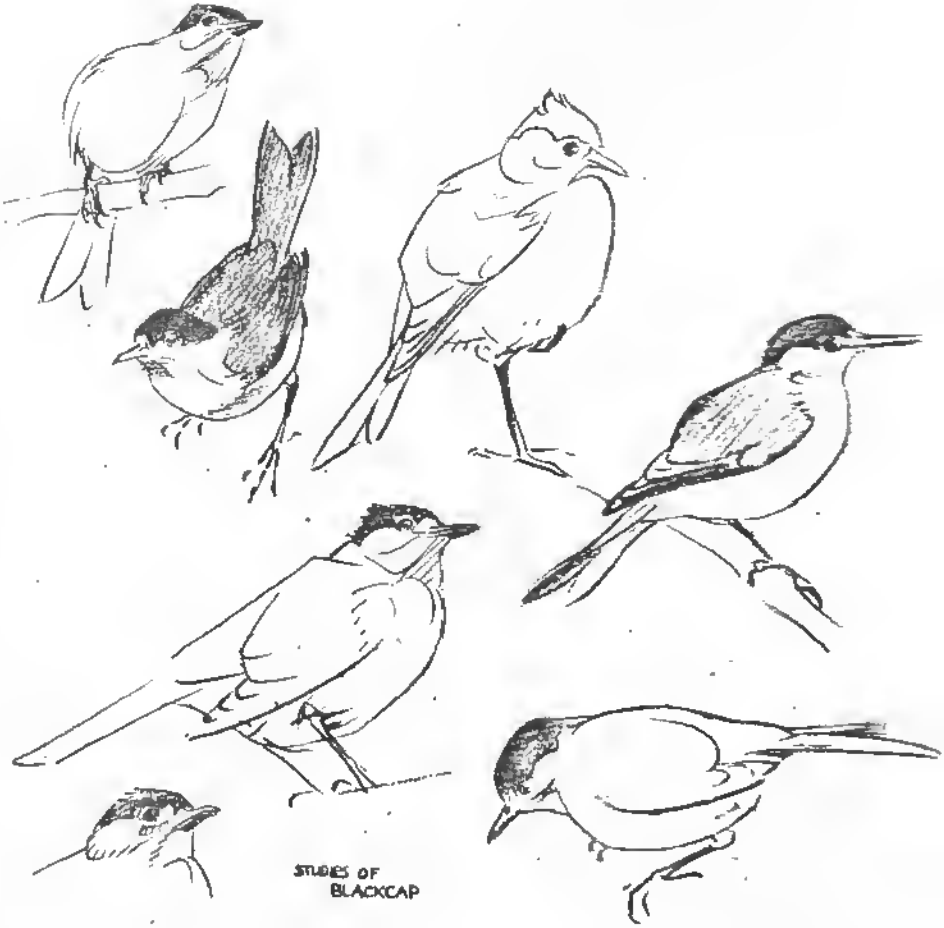


STUDIES OF
STARLINGS

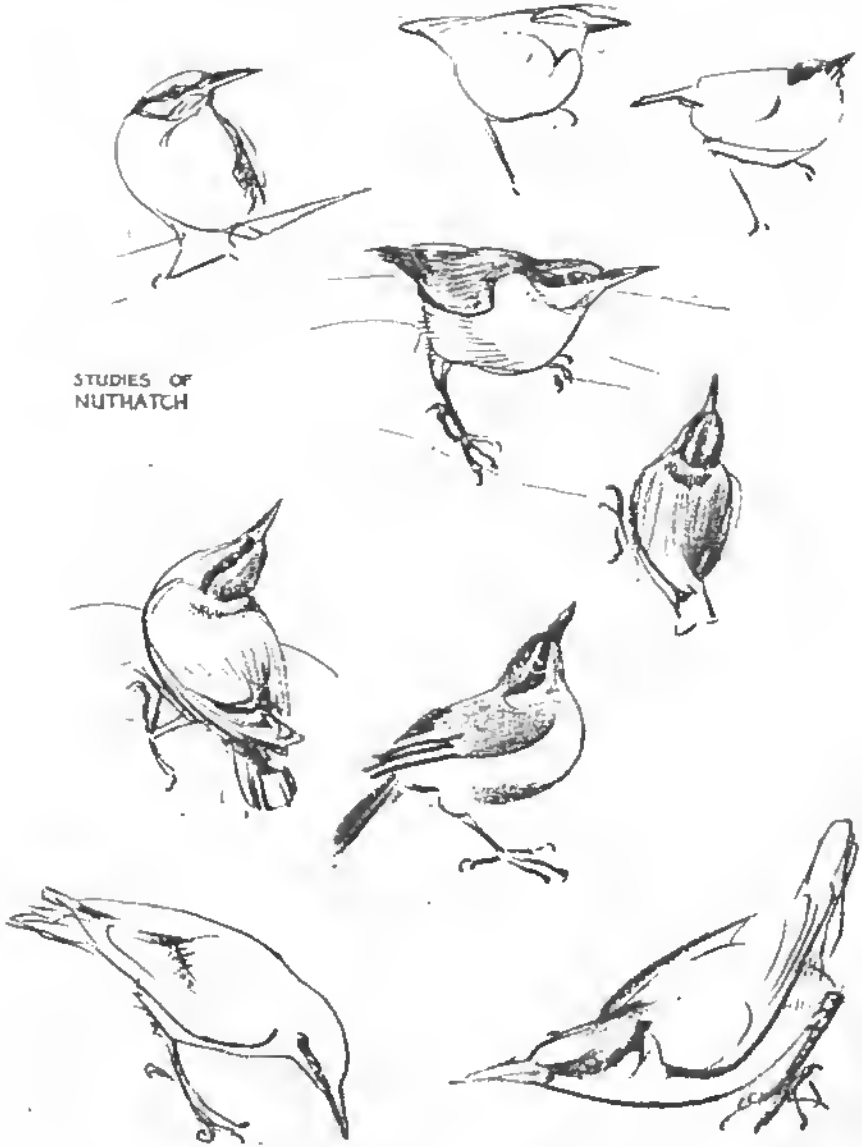
The first of these is a page of studies of the blackcap—which, as might be assumed from its name, is easily recognisable among warblers by its jet black head. The neck is ashen grey—back wings and tail an ashy-buff—chin white—legs and feet lead-coloured. It is a migrant and as a songster second only to the nightingale, it sings by night as well as by day, and its song is sometimes mistaken for the nightingale's. It is a delicately built little bird and in some of these studies its feathers are loosened and fluffed out, giving it a more rotund appearance than usual.

The next page is devoted to studies of the Nuthatch, who spends most of his time running up and down tree-trunks searching in the crevices of the bark for the insects on which he lives most of the summer. He seems just as much at home when hanging upside down as in any other position.

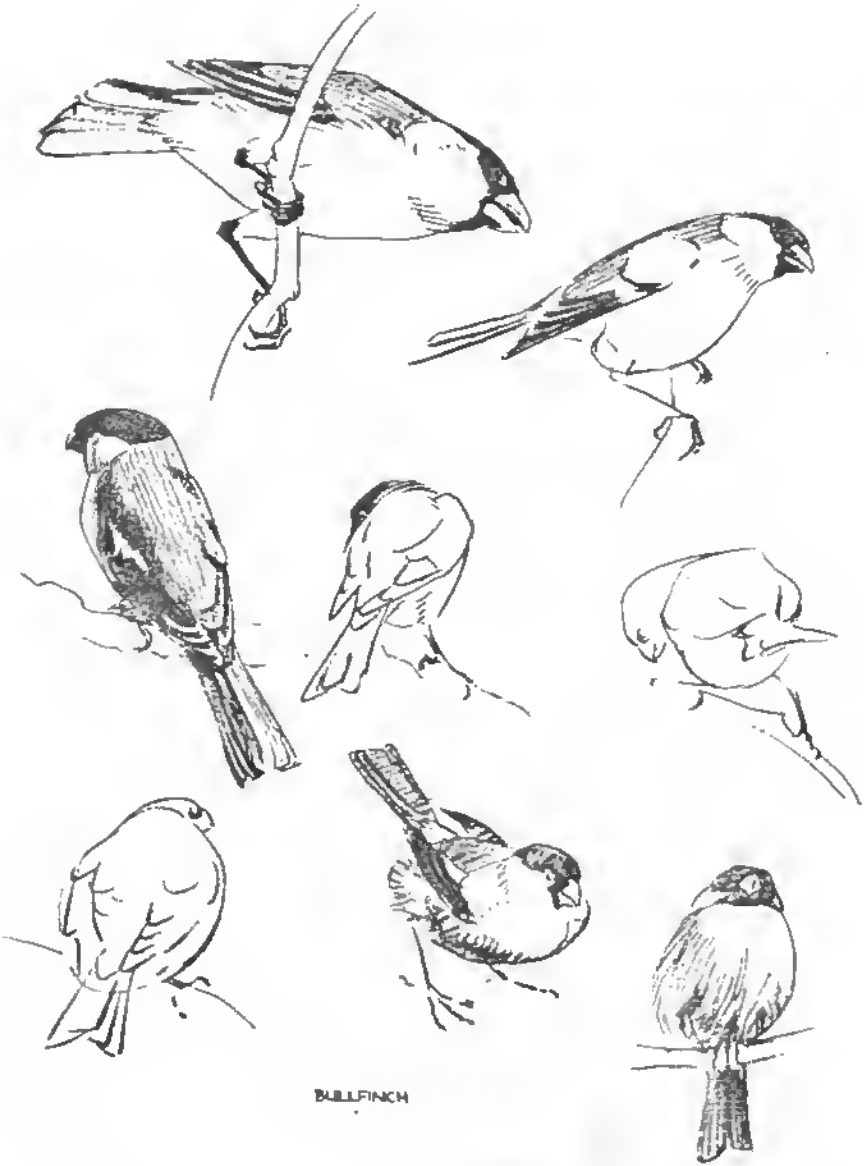
The squat bullet headed shape of the bullfinch is typical of all the finches—its strong squat beak for extracting seeds. Its bright red breast and black head with pale grey back—make it easily recognisable among the finches.



STUDIES OF
BLACKCAP



STUDIES OF
NUTHATCH



BULLFINCH

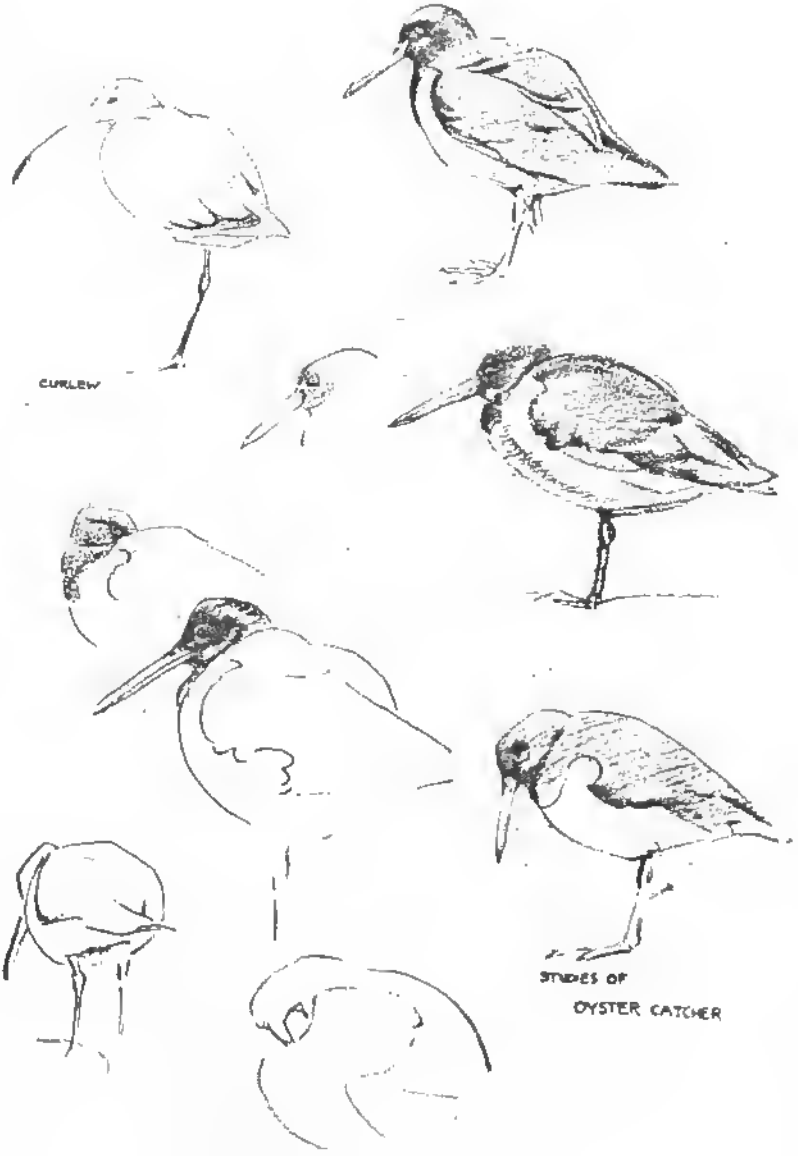
OYSTER-CATCHER AND CURLEW

The oyster-catcher is one of our most beautiful shore birds with its striking plumage of black and white simply divided into clear-cut masses—it is an excellent subject to draw.

When drawing birds at rest, balanced on one foot, note how the supporting leg leans slightly inward to preserve the balance of the bird.

The birds in the sketch are resting, waiting for the tide to fall, when they will wander over the ooze and rocks in search of cockles and worms.

The top left hand bird is a curlew. Its long curved bill may vary in length from four to seven inches. It takes its name from its peculiar wild cry—familiar on shore and estuary.

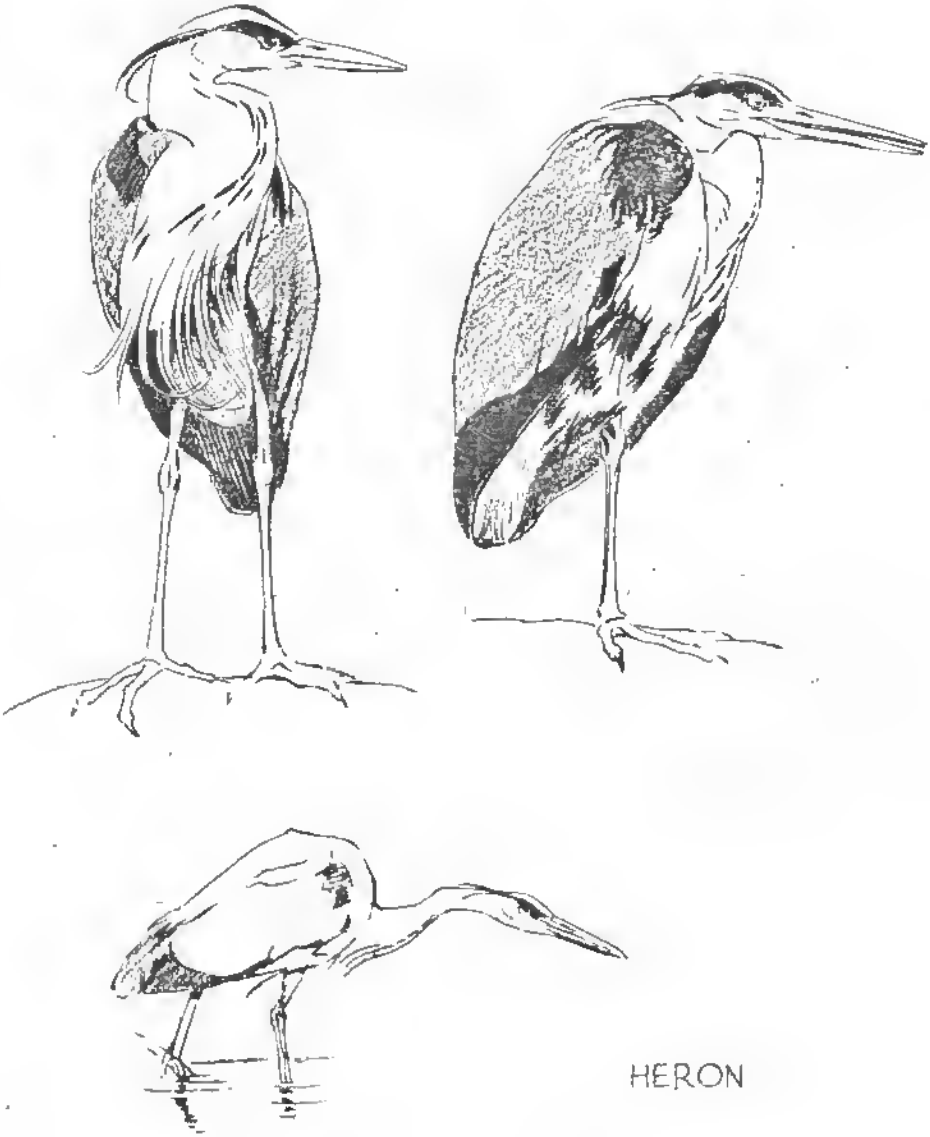

CURLEW
STUDIES OF
OYSTER CATCHER

HERON

This most graceful bird, is an expert fisher, and may be seen wading along the banks of stream or lake. He hurls his beak like a spear at his victim, and transfixes the fish. Often he stands still on one leg, for his characteristic attitude when at rest, with his head drawn in between hunched shoulders. These birds offer great decorative possibilities to the artist. Birds of this type were a constant source of inspiration to the far-Eastern artists of Japan and China. On the wing they are equally magnificent, rising slowly with long legs trailing, the head gradually drawn back into the shoulders as the bird gathers speed and rises.

Its flight feathers are black, but only the ends of these show in the sketches, protruding from beneath its grey mantle.

The beak is yellow and the legs greenish yellow. When drawing the outstretched neck, look for angularity at the bend rather than curvature—too great an insistance on the curve will make it look like a piece of bent tubing. The bony structure is inferred in a judicious use of straight lines and angles.



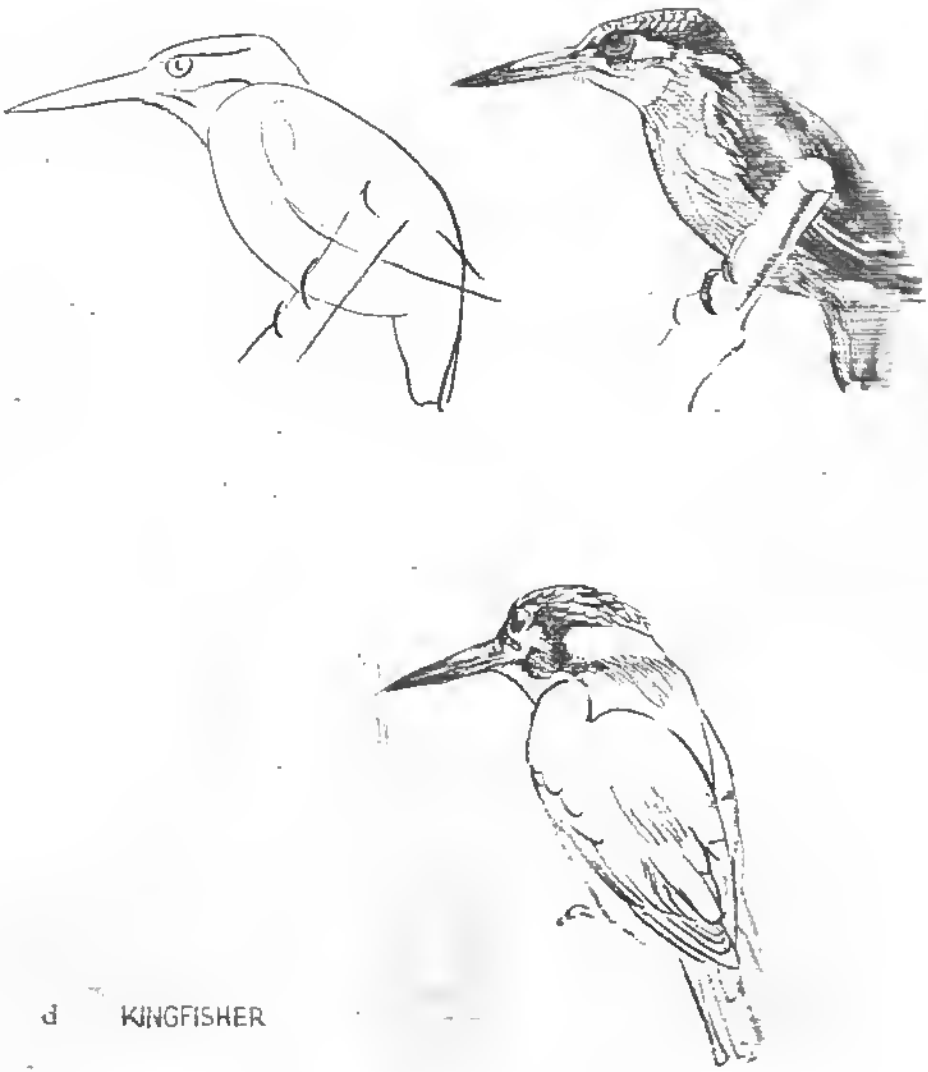
HERON

KINGFISHER

To the casual wanderer along the shores of a stream the Kingfisher is generally a darting flash of blue as the bird dashes for the shelter of the bank. This bird however, is more common than is usually thought, its favourite resorts being rivers and streams which have stretches of perpendicular clay banks. These banks are necessary for the location of its nesting-hole—a tunnel driven into the face of the clay to a depth of about two and a half feet.

The sketches opposite show the bird in its most characteristic position seated on a branch overhanging the water, into which it will plunge in pursuit of small fry and minnows. It is a very beautifully coloured bird with its unmatched, brilliant-blue back and rufous breast.

Its eye has a cold and fishy gleam—and its feathers indeed look rather like scales. It is to the smaller fish what the heron is to the larger trout and eels—a terror!



d KINGFISHER

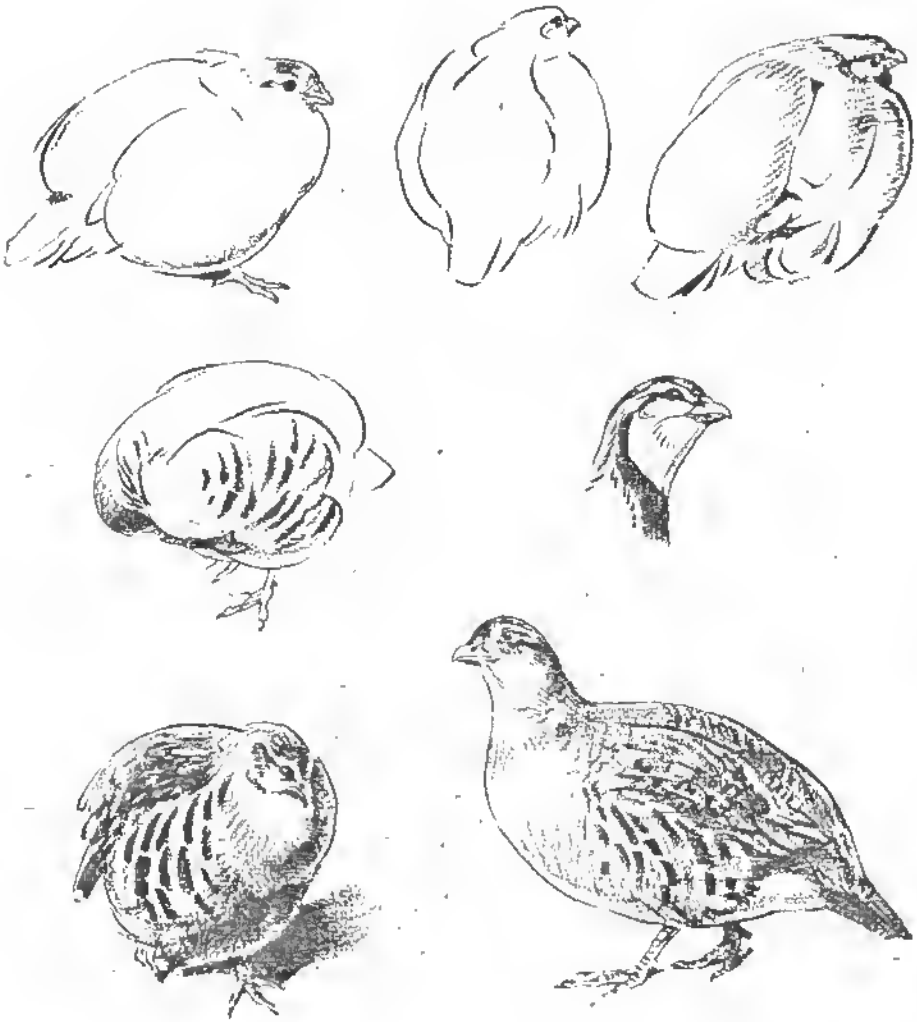
PARTRIDGE

I have chosen this little bird to represent the great family of 'game birds' because it is by far the one most commonly met with in the country, indeed most of us must at one time or another, have had our country rambles suddenly startled by its abrupt departure on rapidly whirring wings, from our very feet. In five of these studies the bird had so puffed out its feathers as to give it almost the appearance of a feathered football. It was basking in the sun on a bright frosty day.

You will notice that in some of these studies I have utilized light and shade in order to obtain a greater appearance of solidity. The rule is—light comes forward and dark retires—put any sphere, an orange, for instance, on the table in front of you—and you can learn all the principles of light and shade from it.

The bottom right hand drawing shows the bird with feathers pressed down. The partridge is a beautifully marked bird, with dark rufous stripes on breast-feathers. The light quills of its wing coverts make a clear pattern of pale flicks against the dark mottling of the back.

The head study is of a red-legged partridge.

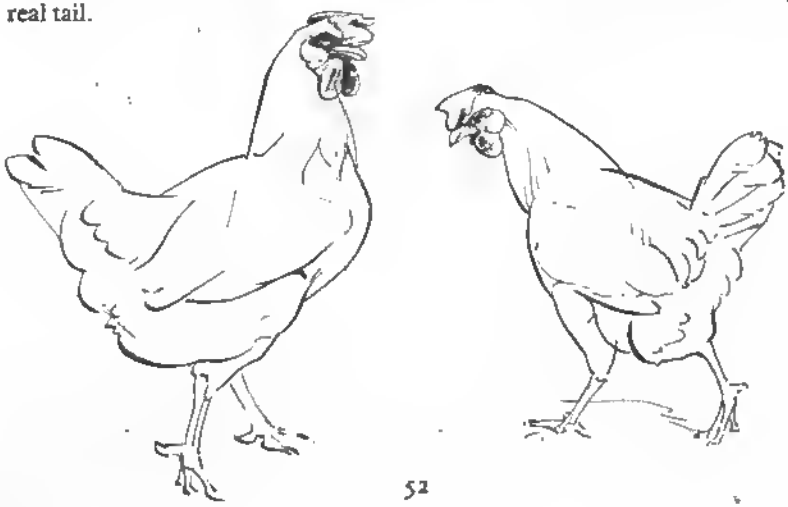


PARTRIDGE

DOMESTIC FOWL

Although not a British Bird in the strict sense of the word, the domestic fowl is such a typical part of the farm and countryside.

Points to notice are the wedge-like shape of the masses, particularly the hen—which is not a very beautiful bird, unless one searches very carefully for the main lines and rhythm which follow through her rather ungainly bulk. The Cockerel, however, is a very lordly bird, and in the hands of the artist is full of great decorative possibilities, particularly in the curve of the sickle feathers which hang over the real tail.



COCKERELS

RAVEN

This fairly rare bird, is however first in popular imagination of the crow family, and I suppose is responsible for more legends than most birds. It does in fact stand first among its kind, being more intelligent and highly developed than any other of our birds.

Its remarkable eyesight can spot carrion miles away—and its equally remarkable stomach seems to digest anything dead,—or alive for that matter—which falls beneath this great pickaxe of a beak. The colour is really a wonderfully ' shot ' purply-black, which glistens in the sun.

To the artist and naturalist it is a bird full of interesting character. An ageless wisdom gleams in its cunning eye : a cunning which however seems to be tempered with a roguish sense of humour. It is remarkable that in the face of such relentless persecution from the hands of man, such a large bird has escaped complete extinction.

A straight and rugged squareness indicative of a compact strength are the characteristic lines to be looked for when drawing the sitting bird. On the wing it appears to be a heavy flier—hut in reality is a superb master of wing-craft.

STUDIES OF A RAVEN

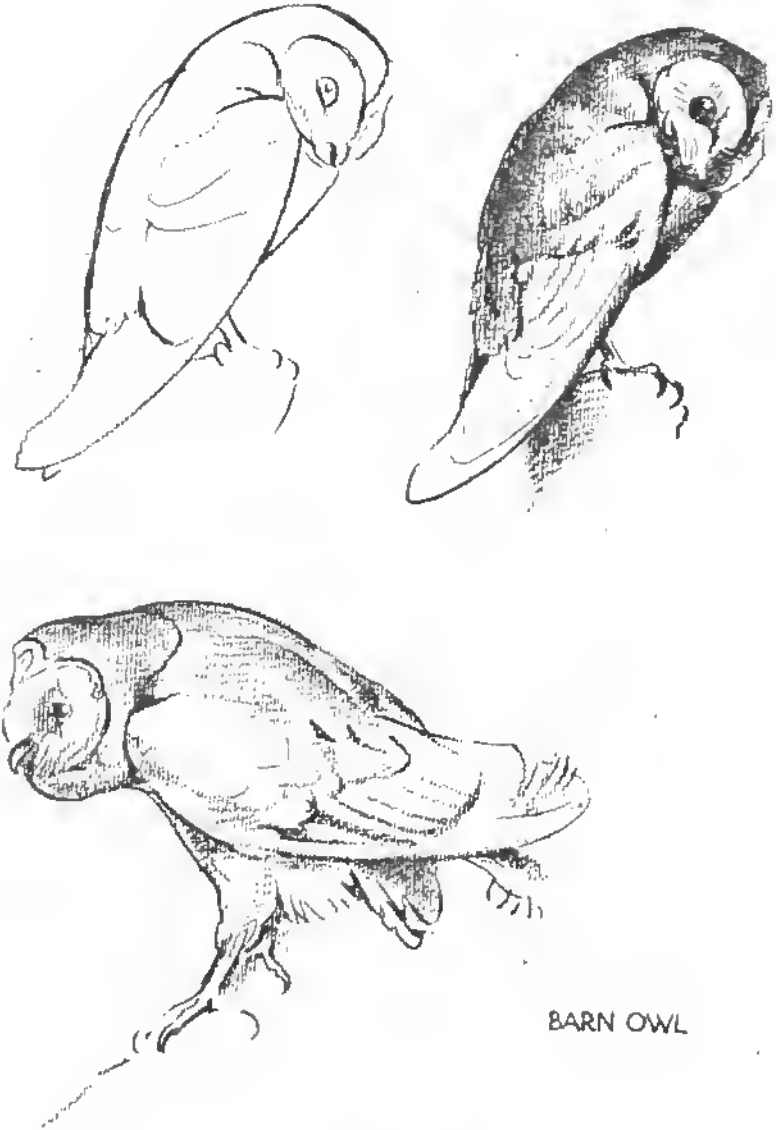
THREE BIRDS OF PREY
BARN OWL, BUZZARD AND GOLDEN EAGLE

The Owl, like the Raven, is a bird which has been immortalized by the literature of the world. These drawings are of a Barn Owl, a fairly common bird but owing to its dislike of sunlight is rarely seen. Note the arrangement of the feathers, forming the facial disc round the eyes, so typical of these birds. Their round heads have a startling flexibility and they can turn their heads right round and look straight at you over their backs.

In these studies I have not attempted to delineate plumage markings, but have concentrated on the beautiful simple forms of the bird itself. I have used the light and shade as in the studies of the partridge and raven to bring out the main solid forms.

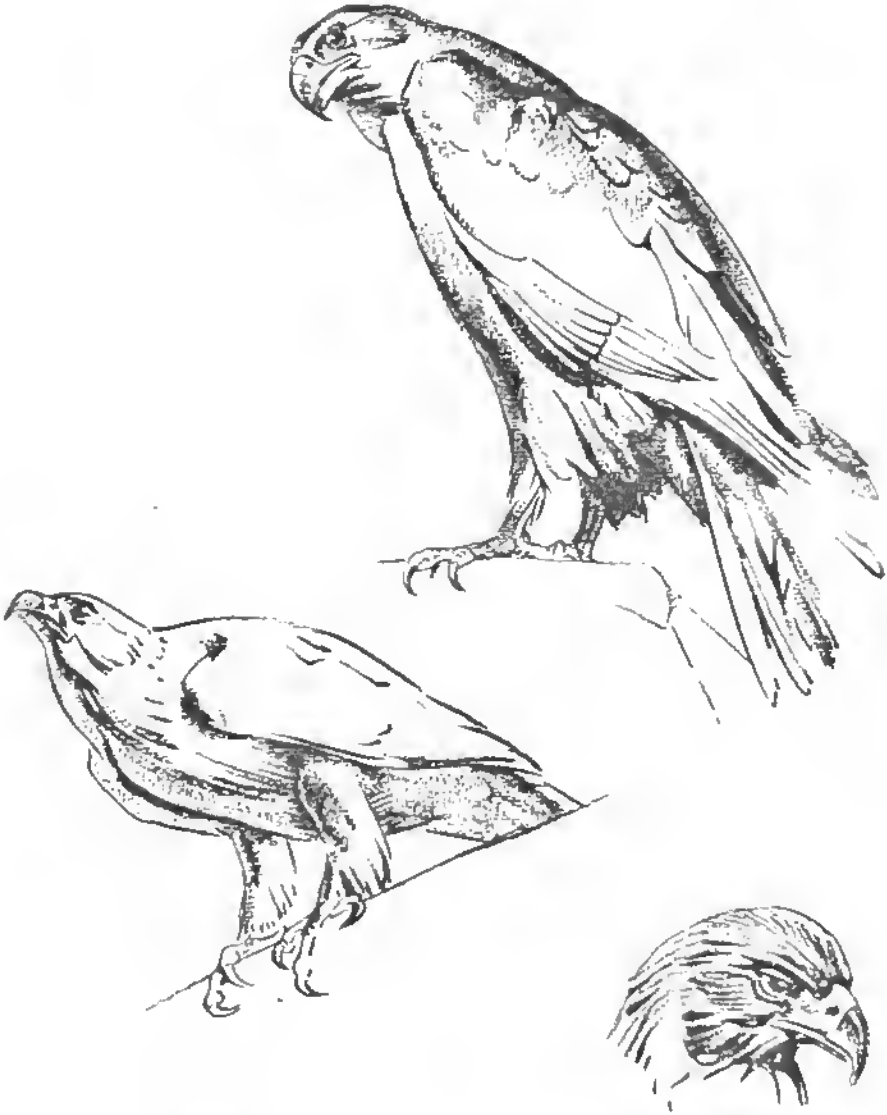
The Buzzard, scarce in the greater part of England is fairly common in Wales and the west country. It is easily recognisable on the wing by its habit of soaring for hours often wheeling in circles, rising effortlessly on the ascending air-currents.

The Golden Eagle, our largest bird of prey, is practically confined to the highlands of Scotland.



BARN OWL

COMMON BUZZARD



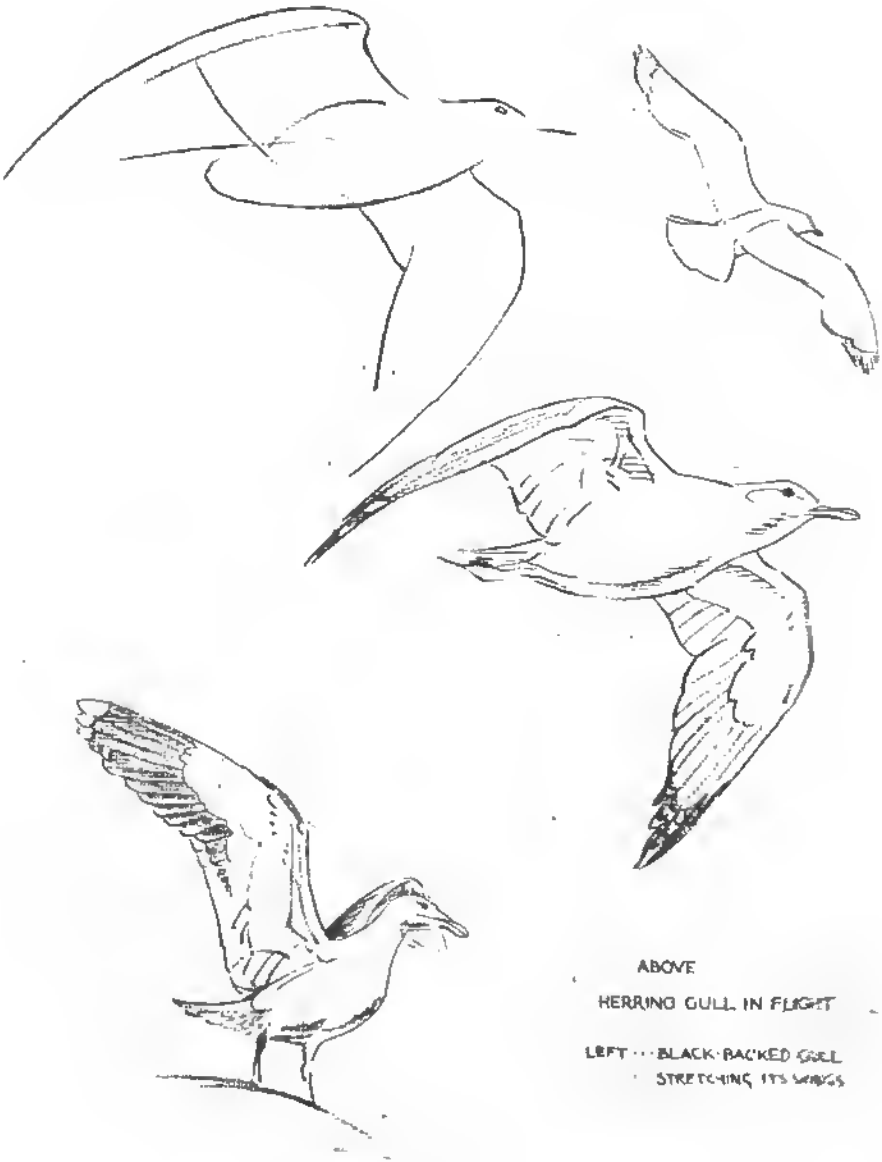
GOLDEN EAGLE

ON THE WING
GULLS — DUCK — SWALLOW AND KESTREL

Drawing birds on the wing requires endless study and hours of patient observation. At first try and get down on paper only the few lines sufficient to indicate the main position of wings in relation to body and tail, details can be added from memory afterwards.

The page of ducks in flight shows some of the positions assumed by the wings visible to the human eye. The one in the bottom-right hand corner is just leaving the water. For the first few strokes, the wings make their greatest stretch upwards, forwards and downwards—indeed sometimes the wing-tips meet above their heads in this initial stretch up—the downward pressure separates the pointed pinion tips, whose flexible ends bend almost at right angles to the shaft. The duck *rises in a spiral gradually drawing up its feet under its tail.*

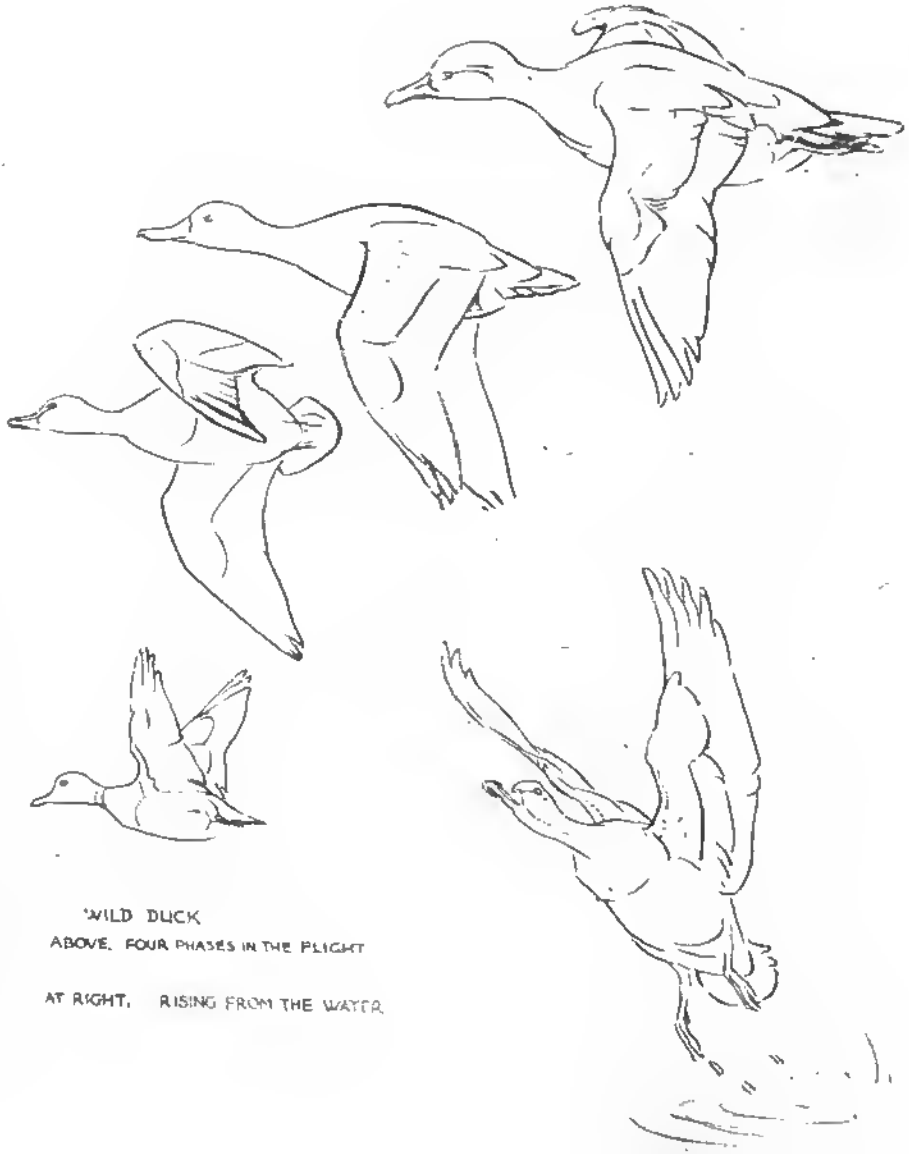
The remaining plates are of swallows and a kestrel — note the zig-zag line about the cut of the wings and tail of the swallows. An emphasis on this characteristic always conveys a great impression of speed and dash.



ABOVE

HERRING GULL IN FLIGHT

LEFT · · · BLACK-BACKED GULL
STRETCHING ITS WINGS



WILD DUCK
ABOVE, FOUR PHASES IN THE FLIGHT

AT RIGHT, RISING FROM THE WATER

ABOVE AND TOP - SWALLOW FLYING

AT RIGHT — HOVERING AT NEST

KESTREL

A HOVERING

B FLYING, LOOKING DOWN ON THE GROUND